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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TOKYO 000795

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SUBJECT: ADVOCATING FOR HUMAN DIGNITY: AMBASSADOR REES'  
FEBRUARY 8-9 MEETINGS WITH JAPANESE OFFICIALS

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Joseph R. Donovan for reasons 1.4 (b) a  
nd (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Japan and the United States need to work together to reduce the systematic sexual violence against women in Burma, Ambassador Rees told Japanese officials during his February 8-9 Tokyo meetings. Japan shares U.S. concerns about human rights in Burma, but prefers a softer approach, his interlocutors stated. On development assistance, both countries agreed that supporting programs that produce results is more important than creating more policy-making bodies. Japan believes the United States should join the Human Rights Council. End Summary.

¶2. (C) During his February 8-9 visit to Tokyo, Ambassador Grover Joseph Rees briefed MOFA Director General of Global Issues Ambassador Koji Tsuruoka, Director General of Southeast and Southwest Asian Affairs Chihiro Atsumi, and Ambassador in Charge of UN Affairs Masato Kitera on the genesis of his Special Representative position and the range of issues covered in his portfolio. To each, he described the purpose of this Asia visit as building multilateral coalitions on human dignity issues.

International Organizations: Less Talk, More Action  
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¶3. (C) Ambassador Rees praised the work of existing multilateral organizations, such as WHO, UNICEF, and UNIFEM, but bemoaned the trend within some organizations away from high-impact, low-cost field interventions, such as vaccination programs, toward more conferences and symposia. While many of these organizations have excellent ideas for dealing with important issues, such as child mortality, rape, maternal health, and HIV/AIDS, he explained, they often lack the operational programs to implement these initiatives. Ambassador Rees observed that UNICEF, under the leadership of Executive Director Ann Veneman, is moving back toward being a "results-based" organization, and he suggested that we need to push other UN agencies to move in the same direction. He also pointed to a U.S. women's empowerment program in Kenya -- a kind of one-stop shop for rape victims -- as a good example of an effective program.

¶4. (C) Ambassador Kitera, drawing several examples from his own 20-year career at MOFA, agreed with Ambassador Rees on the tendency of international organizations to talk about issues, rather than taking concrete actions to resolve them. He referenced Foreign Minister Taro Aso's November 2006 speech on the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" to highlight Japan's commitment to human rights, democracy, and humanitarian issues, and assured Ambassador Rees that Japan wants to participate in further discussions on these issues.

In practical terms, however, Japan is limited by economic realities, he lamented, including a 38 percent decrease in the ODA budget over the past 10 years. Pressed by Ambassador Rees on leveraging Japan's limited funds through contributions to multilateral organizations, Ambassador Kitera expressed concern that Japan's financial presence is steadily diminishing. He appreciated the issues-oriented approach that Ambassador Rees is taking to problems such as child rape, but stressed it is going to be difficult to translate generalized concepts into nuts and bolts solutions.

15. (C) To promote sustainable aid to developing countries, Japan focuses on dispatching personnel as well as providing funding, Ambassador Tsuruoka explained. There is still a lot of resentment in many developing countries, regarding the perceived U.S. policy of promoting birth control rather than supporting projects that promote sustainable development, he asserted. Ambassador Rees responded that he had heard similar complaints about US policies in the 1980s and 1990s, but that if the United States ever did have a policy of promoting population control over other forms of assistance to people in the developing world, it no longer has such a policy. That may be the case, Ambassador Tsuruoka rejoined, but a lot of resentment remains.

16. (C) Promoting child and maternal health care is very important, the two ambassadors agreed. Tsuruoka explained that Japan has started a pilot project in Jakarta to promote well-baby check-ups and vaccinations and plans to expand the project since it is a low cost way to help mothers provide medical protection for their children. Tsuruoka also said developing countries can utilize agencies like the

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International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) to help prevent the exploitation of women. Many countries have an "allergy" to a bilateral approach; multilateral efforts look much more neutral, he observed. Japan has also provided funds to the IPPF to provide contraception for construction workers in order to help prevent the spread of HIV. Regrettably, many construction workers turn to rape if they cannot afford prostitutes, and in cases where rape cannot be prevented, reducing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases is the next best step, Ambassador Tsuruoka asserted. Ambassador Rees responded that providing condoms is an inadequate response to rape, and that this approach sounded like the very misallocation of priorities that Ambassador Tsuruoka had criticized about past US policies. While the United States has learned the lessons of the overemphasis on birth control in development assistance programs of the 1980s and 1990s, the IPPF is a living example of the axiom that when the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.

17. (C) Japan is continuously brainstorming on ways to improve gender equality so women can become "engines of economic sustainability," Ambassador Tsuruoka stated. Japan is happy to work with the United States; MOFA and USAID are already cooperating. Japan would be in a much better position to help the United States if it were a permanent member of the UNSC, Ambassador Tsuruoka noted. Ambassador Rees responded that the United States strongly supports Japan's bid for a permanent UNSC seat, even if there have sometimes been disagreement on how to achieve this important goal.

Burma: Child Rape and Other Human Rights Abuses  
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18. (C) Citing Burma as one of only two countries, along with Sudan, that uses systematic rape as a tool for demoralizing and controlling ethnic communities, Ambassador Rees urged Japan to join the United States in opposing the Burmese regime's use of rape, especially child rape, as a means of suppressing the Burmese people. The rape of Shan, Chin, Mon,

Karen, and Kachin women by the Burmese military has been well documented and verified since 2002, stated Ambassador Rees. Burmese activist Charm Tong told a panel including First Lady Laura Bush that victims have been as young as eight years old. Regardless of differences in opinion between Japan and the United States on approaches to Burma, Ambassador Rees asserted, the two allies share a similar vision for Burma. Urging Burma to stop this egregious human rights violation doesn't need to wait for a democratic government, Ambassador Rees stressed. Noting that Japan has more communication with the military regime than the United States, Ambassador Rees requested that Japan voice its concern on sexual violence against women during bilateral talks with Burma.

¶9. (C) Japan is "gravely concerned" about human rights in Burma, DG Atsumi stated, and regularly raises the issue in bilateral meetings. Nonetheless, pushing Burma closer to China must be avoided. At the same time Japanese ODA to Burma is decreasing, China-sponsored projects are two to three times bigger than they used to be. Without the advantage of ODA-driven diplomacy, Japan must be "more imaginative" in engaging the regime, said DG Atsumi. Japan will continue to raise human rights concerns with Burma and would be willing to bring up systematic rape as well, especially if there is significant evidence, which DG Atsumi said he has not seen so far. Japan will also keep talking to China about Burma, DG Atsumi told Ambassador Rees, but Chinese investment in Burma will continue to stand in the way of any pressure on Burma from its northern neighbor.

¶10. (C) International organizations need to do more to fight the root causes of poverty in places like Burma in order to bring about change, Ambassador Kitera emphasized. He suggested that more carrots are needed for dealing with Burma, such as praise for efforts on opium eradication. Reflecting on his MOFA experience trying to raise funds for yen loans to Burma in 1998, he blamed the international community for failing to provide additional incentives after the regime "liberalized" their treatment of ASSK in 1995. Ambassador Rees rejected the notion that the United States did not try to work with Burma in the past, and suggested that Japan might use some of the documented evidence of child rapes in its dealings with the regime. He reiterated the importance of dealing with concrete issues in the short-term, while continuing the longer-term fight against poverty and

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for a democratic system.

¶11. (C) Japan shares U.S. concerns about the need to reduce sexual violence against women, but rape is just one aspect of gender inequality, Ambassador Tsuruoka observed. Local communities need to protect individuals against rape. This can be accomplished through education initiatives such as UNICEF programs. Improving women's rights in developing countries is necessary for economic sustainability because the social structure often deprives women of educational opportunities. In some countries women are denied access to education because they are occupied with household tasks like bringing water to their village from remote locations. Japan has been digging wells in villages so women will have time to pursue education, Ambassador Tsuruoka said.

UN Human Rights Council: Poor Results  
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¶12. (C) Ambassador Rees held out hope for a Burma resolution in the Human Rights Council (HRC) this spring. Ambassador Kitera seemed less hopeful, noting that while Japan has been on the Council, the Council's preoccupation with Israel has led to poor results thus far. Ambassador Rees suggested that the Council might find a way to offer Burma technical assistance in the human rights area. Ambassador Kitera expressed concern that the Council is seeking to eliminate many of its current practices and mandates, including the system of rapporteurs. He also cautioned against taking too

hard a line on resolutions, or submitting resolutions that are not likely to succeed, citing Japan's own reluctance to submit a resolution on human rights abuses in the DPRK. Ambassador Rees disagreed, saying he considers the nine votes recently obtained for a "strong and truthful" Burma resolution in the UN Security Council a measure of success. Ambassador Rees reaffirmed that a UNSC seat for Japan is still an important mutual goal.

¶13. (C) Since the United States is not part of the HRC, it does not appear engaged, Ambassador Tsuruoka contended. It is not enough for the United States to tell the HRC what to do "from the outside." It would be much easier for the United States to join the HRC than for Japan to become a permanent UNSC member, Ambassador Tsuruoka argued. Ambassador Rees responded that the U.S. is currently considering whether to run for the HRC, and will do so only if we decide that the potential for accomplishing good things outweighs the risk that U.S. candidacy would have the unintended consequence of lending a measure of legitimacy to the disappointing record of the HRC thus far.

¶14. (U) Ambassador Rees cleared this cable.  
DONOVAN